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BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES.

In this day of benevolent enterprise, associations of individuals for the accomplishment of a specific object, are frequent. By concentrating single efforts to one point, as the burning-glass brings the bright sunbeams to a focus, these associations easily effect important changes in the moral aspect and true happiness of the world.

They rally the friends of a good cause around a common standard, and exercise that sway in the empire of opinion, which belongs to the nobility in a monarchical government. The cause they espouse assumes dignity; the end they seek swells in importance, and is almost sure to be attained. The ease with which they gather their treasures from ten thousand springs into one great stream, and apply their energies even to the remotest parts of the earth, is a matter of daily observation.

Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Sunday School Societies, Charitable Societies, Literary Societies, Agricultural Societies, and useful societies of every name and denomination, are the glory of our country, and among the highest hopes of the age.

Our illustrious citizens preside over them, our enterprising citizens direct them, and the most industrious and valuable of our fellow citizens sustain them.

CONSPIRACIES.

It is not necessary that the design be benevolent or holy, to test the importance of associated effort for its accomplishment. Conspiracy and treason draw their chief strength from a thousand secret channels, and effect their aim by bringing the energies of all, unexpectedly to burst upon a single point.

They can show kindness and patriotism, when it is necessary for their better concealment; and oftentimes do much good with the sole purpose of getting a better opportunity to do evil.

But these do not lightly admit or dismiss members. Those who have been once in their secrets, must be silent for ever after. They must have the consent of all to enter, and having entered, their allegiance ends only with life.

THE MANNER OF BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES.

But every benevolent society has a specific object to attain, which distinguishes it from all the rest: as the Bible Society, to circulate the scriptures; and the Missionary Society, to support teachers.

They all are by nature charitable societies, and seek to ameliorate the conditions of sinful man. They hold membership to be an honour, and count it no disgrace to invite the just and merciful to enroll their names in the register of the society.

They agree, generally, in allowing an annual, or a life membership, at the option of the subscriber; and in either case leave him free to attend the meetings or not, as he chooses.

The benevolence of these societies beams in every direction from an open center, as light from the unclouded sun; and leaves none to doubt their character, or to mistake their object.

CONTRASTED WITH THE MANNER OF FREEMASONRY.

Of all the great associations of the present day, Free Masonry is peculiar and extraordinary. It claims with the others to be benevolent in its designs, while it hides itself like treason.

It professes to ameliorate the condition of man, not by supporting teachers, or by rewarding agriculture, or by any other single operation; but altogether in a general way.

While other benevolent societies uniformly agree to strengthen themselves in public esteem by the fullest display of their proceedings, this alone strengthens itself in secrecy; while the others have invariably a single benevolent aim in view, which they carefully proclaim, this alone carefully wraps itself in mystery, folds its precise object in thick darkness, and leaving the inquirer to study its direct aim, replies with manifest importance - "I am secret."

FREEMASONRY INVITES NO MEMBERS.

Now this is singular! The members of all other benevolent societies exhort their fellow citizens to join in the work of benevolence, and aid in effecting the proposed good. Free Masonry is independent and indifferent to all the world besides.

It is a rule of the institution, (we do not say it is strictly observed,) never to solicit any to join her ranks, to favor her schemes, or to aid by membership in accomplishing her plans.

THIS HAS LED MEN TO SUPPOSE THAT FREEMASONRY HAS NOTHING TO SET BEFORE A GUEST.

This remarkable trait in the constitution of the society has undoubtedly led many reflecting minds to conclude, that the institution is merely frivolous.

If it had an object in view worth naming, it could not fail, in setting it forth, to invite all good men and true to enlist in its attainment.

If it can teach mathematics by a royal way, or extract Hebrew roots with a stump machine; if it can teach men to circumscribe their passions with a pair of compasses, and to reform their hearts with a mason's hammer; if it can teach brotherly love by a mortar cement, and benevolence in donations extracted by an oath; it should entreat youth to join and receive its benefits.

But as Free Masonry never legally invites new members, it is legally inferred to be an empty thing, without any object to set before them; and so thousands of our youth are tempted to join the organization with the hope of filling it with a scheme or two of their own, and of engrafting upon a mighty stock some object of private interest, or of personal ambition.

BUT FREEMASONRY IS NOT FRIVOLOUS.

It is impossible, however, that a society should accumulate funds, build splendid halls, command the precious time of the statesman, hold in subservience the pen of the scholar, try the intellects of the orator, gain the support of the divine, and yet be merely frivolous.

It is impossible that a society merely frivolous, should find sensible men willing to give it all their time as Grand Lecturers, much of their time as Masters, and invariably their money as members.

It is impossible that a society merely frivolous should constantly refuse to take a member without the consent of all; or to take members for a month, or a year, or any less term than for life; should never discharge them from service; but under its full penalties, require them forever "to obey all regular signs and summons, given, sent, or thrown by the hand of a brother, or from the body of a legally constituted Lodge, provided that it be within the length of the cable tow." (Understood to be three miles.)

There is something earnest in all this, but the object is concealed.

Great men are not always occupied with matters of importance; yet, when they give themselves to Free Masonry, not as a pleasant recreation, but as a laborious business, committing its minute details, and feeding on its boasted mysteries, at the same time they pay much attention to the outward prosperity of the order, *great* men give all the evidence in their power to give, that Free Masonry is a weighty matter.

Free Masonry embraces with its secret ties, men of distinguished literary attainments, and of the most exalted reputation in civil and in military life; and it must have in its interior something more than the usual revelations of its mysteries declare; must have something which can occupy the mind of a man of serious reflection, who cannot be satisfied with puerilities, nor accept of mere jargon in requital for the time he devotes to the order.

We do not mean to call in question the verbal accuracy of a work, which Free Masonry has sanctioned with her utmost efforts, and sealed, like a worshipper of Moloch, with the life-blood of her own son; but the institution must have a secret, must have an aim, must have a something about it yet untold, or requiring to be explained, in order to have wrought into its woof of glory the time, and talents, and name of many honored dead, and revered among the living.

FREE MASONRY DISPLACES CHRISTIANITY.

If the institution have any specific object of pursuit, it should, like other societies, steadily set forth that object; but, if its object be independently to inculcate a reverence for the Deity, and love to our neighbor, as is often professed in the constitutions of Masonry, the institution undertakes too much, undertakes the proper office of Christianity; we disapprove its design, and dispense with its incompetent services.

"Very well," says a mason, "you are at liberty to do so; while with Washington and Franklin, and the good LaFayette, I approve the design, and employ the services or Free Masonry."

This is the thing we sadly fear, that men using the rickety steps of Free Masonry, to scale heaven, reject the sure way of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; that men hearkening to the dogmas of a human institution, turn away their ears from the heavenly doctrines of the cross; that men seeking out to themselves this new found invention of Free Masonry, receive a stone for bread; and for a fish, a serpent.

If any human institution offers itself to perform the proper office of Christianity, it should be rejected at once. Christianity will do its own work better than any contrivance we can use in

its stead: and the very offer of *another institution* independently to inculcate in the human mind a reverence for the Deity, and love to our neighbor, is proof that such institution is an impostor.

So certain as it is another institution, having for its grand object to inculcate religious fear and neighborly love, so certain it is another Gospel, and not that of our Lord; and it should be rejected as a broken staff, "on which if a man lean it will pierce his hand."

FREE MASONRY THE SERVANT OF THE GOSPEL.

"General Washington did not use Free Masonry as another Gospel, but in aid of that already given in heaven." We allow it; but observe, this makes a most important change in the professed object of Free Masonry.

Its grand object now is not itself to serve for religion; but to serve the Lord by aiding his Gospel. No doubt Washington so regarded it, and so also does every Christian mason; and if it be a faithful servant of the Lord's Gospel, well; if not, Christian brother, it is time we knew it.

THE HANDMAID OF RELIGION. HER PECULIARITIES.

"Free Masonry is the *handmaid* of religion."

This is often said, and by pious masons is truly believed. Now, a handmaid waits near her mistress to receive all her commands.

When did religion bid her handmaid Freemasonry to hide her light under a bushel?

When did religion bid her handmaid Freemasonry utterly to refuse her services to the fairer half of the human family?

When did religion bid her handmaid Freemasonry to invite never a man to enter her gates, or to communicate her blessings?

Free Masonry is a faithless servant acting contrary to orders.

This professed handmaid of religion has other remarkable peculiarities.

A monthly meeting, not of the Directors of the Institution, or the executive officers only, but of all the members. When they meet, they meet in the night; where they meet, there is but one entrance, and invariably at that will be found a trusty brother with a weapon of death naked in his hands; and none legally enter there, who have not first entered with a rope, or *cable tow* about the neck, and received an oath of secrecy, which seals their lips upon every transaction happening within the door guarded by the weapon of death.

"No prying eye can view us here,
No fool or knave disturb our cheer."

Having tarried from two to four hours, the members disperse; and notwithstanding they inhabit the same country, surround the same table, the same fireside, and the same altar, with other servants of the Lord, and professors of his religion whose professed handmaid Free Masonry is, they open not their lips to blame or to praise this Mystery.

The craft to which they belong, is sufficiently discoverable to excite curiosity; yet, in the full tide of confiding intercourse among those participating in the same religious privileges, friendships,

and joys, an allusion made with a view to sound the character of this anomalous handmaid of religion, checks the flow of conversation, seals the lips of friendship, and either turns argument to jest, or inquirer bitterly to feel that the ground he did but touch upon, is consecrated to mystery, and is not to be trodden, even unshod, by the feet of the profane.

DISCOVERING MORE OF THE MASTER, THAN OF A HANDMAID.

All this is a matter of common observation, and has in it no resemblance to the character of a *handmaid*, least of all to the character of a handmaid of religion. It is rather the tone of a master, who gives his orders, and has a perfect right to retain in his own bosom the motives which dictate those orders.

DOUBTS RAISED.

Men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but they set it upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all the house. If Free Masonry have a grand object which is good, why hide the object? If the means used to attain it be just, why conceal them like sin?

We might as soon expect to find thorns amidst clusters of grapes, as to find the barbarous oaths of Free Masonry growing out of any association humane, benevolent or just: the penalties of its obligations better suit a company of banditti, than a society of Christians.

To our judgment it is unnatural that a great body should be formed, completely organized and put into vigorous action, without some specific object in view. To effect that object its form must be accommodated, and its powers directed.

If it have owl's eyes, it requires very little philosophy to tell, that it was made for activity in twilight and darkness; if it have bear's teeth, that it was made to devour flesh; but if it have the falsehood of the adversary, that it was made to destroy the souls of men.

For what a society was formed, which never assembles without putting a weapon of death to guard the door; and which studiously conceals itself from the inquest of the upright man, unless he debase himself to take the *cable tow* about his neck, and the oath of absolute secrecy on his lips, every one will doubtfully surmise.

And although Free Masons can certainly tell to a man, what led them to join the lodge, few of them can tell to what end the Institution was formed, or have any notion of the direct aim it takes, or suspect the design it is really intended to accomplish.

They have regarded but the hinder parts of this modern Minotaur, whose annual tribute is not seven, but seven thousand youth, the hopes of our country.

THE RECENT GROWTH OF FREE MASONRY.

It is remarkable that a society unlike and contrary to all other societies in the land, should have grown in this inquiring age, and among this jealous people, to a gigantic height, and to an herculean strength, *in the last thirty years*, without any assignable aim in view, sufficient to satisfy a reflecting mind.

ITS ASSIGNED OBJECTS OF PURSUIT ARE BETTER AND OPENLY ATTAINED BY OTHER SOCIETIES.

The highest adept in Free Masonry cannot name a great and good object, pursued, or pretended to be pursued by the institution, which is not openly and successfully pursued by other societies in the country, the signs and the grips not excepted; and it is wholly unaccountable, that Christians, educated in the same schools, and trained in the same families, should wisely attempt to accomplish the same benevolent ends, by means so diverse, as Free Masonry is diverse from all other benevolent and useful societies.

FREE MASONRY HAS A PECULIAR OBJECT, AS EVERY FORM OF GOVERNMENT HAS, AND EVERY FORM OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

The institution is peculiar, and its object must be peculiar also. Men do not associate in any form without a specific purpose. This purpose is often concealed from the multitude, and from the ignorant; but the learned and the wise are sure to find it out.

Take, for example, the form of government and of religious worship, in which men have been educated. How much the larger part of them quietly submit to the government, and use the prescribed form of worship, without once reflecting, that the end of the one is to secure individuals in their rights, and the end of the other is to lead the heart of the worshiper to the Father of Spirits.

They submit to the government, and use the form of worship, without considering wherefore, and yet, in a just government, and in the divine ordinance, they secure and enjoy their end.

EVERY FREE MASON AIDS IN SECURING THAT OBJECT, HOWEVER RELUCTANTLY.

So Free Masonry comes down to us, like a form of government, or of religious worship. We receive and use it without considering its end, or even whether it have an end.

But it must as necessarily have an aim, as a razor an edge. No edge, no razor; no aim or object, no Free Masonry.

Men associate for some purpose; and, when habit, or education, makes them true to Free Masonry, they effect its purpose, though they do not see it, as certainly as if that purpose were steadily in view.

This important consideration addresses itself to all members of the Fraternity. Though they are indifferent to Free Masonry in their affections, or even hate it in their hearts, they still sustain the order in which they have voluntarily placed themselves; they increase its numerical strength, increase the power of its influence, and, however unwillingly, they serve to the day they rebel, both to steady and to secure the grand aim of the Order.

They may be to Free Masonry no better than a boor to the Autocrat of Russia, yet a few hundred thousand boors give him prodigious strength.

In every extensive government, or society, we shall find the wheels moved by a few, while the many serve to steady and sustain the motion.

A MAN'S INFLUENCE AND WEIGHT OF CHARACTER SUPPORT THE CAUSE TO WHICH HE HAS FREELY GIVEN HIS NAME.

And so it is in Free Masonry. A few Sovereign Inspectors General, and Most Excellent Grand Masters, pull the wires; and the entire body of the Fraternity, every individual with the weight of his name and character, sustains the motions.

Men may say, and often do - "I will not lift a finger to support or to destroy Free Masonry; I will not lay a straw in your way;" but it is in vain. They life the weight of their character, which should be more than a finger, in support of the institution; and leave their names exactly in our way, which are oftentimes more than a straw. But they are wise, and we are simple.

THE GRAND OBJECT OF FREE MASONRY EXPRESSED BY WASHINGTON

In his reply to the polite address of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 1792, General Washington says: "the grand object of Masonry is to promote the happiness of the human race."

Either General Washington mistook the grand object of Masonry, or Masonry takes a mysterious way for its attainment. With entire respect for the memory of General Washington, we shall find much reason to think he was mistaken.

REASON FOR THINKING HIM MISTAKEN.

That an institution whose *grand object is to promote the happiness of the human race*, should strictly forbid its members to *invite* their most intimate friends to unite with the institution in the attainment of that grand object, is a mystery inexplicable upon the common principles of philosophy.

The grand object of the bible Society is to promote the happiness of the human race. Let one article of its constitution forbid any member to invite his friends to unite with the Bible Society in promoting this great object, and all will agree, that in becoming likened to Free Masonry, it departs from the confidence of the friends of the Bible, and diminishes its usefulness.

Suppose, however, that the grand object of Free Masonry is to promote the happiness of the human race, it is remarkable that this society does not seek its object in any specific pursuit, like every other benevolent society; but by its general influence, like Christianity.

PROOF IS FORTHCOMING.

It does not confine its attention to any particular branch of labor, or to inculcate any single truth of importance, like a society for the promotion of temperance, or a Savings Bank; but with authority assumed to be divine, and an antiquity superior to the Gospel, it professes to teach the true name and reverence of the Most High, and the way to the Grand Lodge above.

Free Masonry thus becomes, not the handmaid of religion, like the Missionary Society, but a substitute for religion, acceptable to those who reject divine revelation.

THE SUPPOSED BENEVOLENCE OF FREE MASONRY.

Perhaps General Washington supposed it is the grand object of Free Masonry to promote the happiness of the human race by the practice of benevolence.

It is certain that by far the greatest part of the Fraternity, with whom we converse, believe this; and do not conceive, that any essential change would be made in the aim of Free Masonry, by striking off all its degrees and mummery at a blow.

Sometimes their confidence in the charitable purposes of the institution will hardly allow them to repress their indignation at an effort to show the entire falsity of its claims. They stretch forth their hands with ardor, while their countenance flushes with honest zeal, and repeating the

number of benevolent lodges around them, and some illustrious *charities* which their own eyes have witnessed, they triumphantly declare: "It will take you a long time to persuade us, that such an institution has an evil tendency."

So, too, the burden of the mason's song is charity: the text of the mason's discourse is 1. Cor. xiii. 13. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

Speak a word of doubt, or distrust, or of condemnation, in the ears of an honest mason, and, whether he dwell on the green hills of New England, or in the fertile vales of the Ohio, his defense of Free Masonry is constantly the same: "It is a benevolent Society; it gives to this poor widow, and to that destitute orphan; if you knew its charities you would respect its claims."

CHARITY IS GOD-LIKE.

We are not of those who put light for darkness, and darkness for light; we do not refuse its meed of praise to benevolence, nor our admiration to any institution which confers heavenly charity upon the orphan and widow.

A society whose efforts are consecrated to godlike charity, partakes of the Deity both in the perfectness, and in the sanctity of its character.

The Bible and Missionary, the Sabbath School, and Tract Societies, send forth their blessings upon the unjust. the ungrateful heathen, and the hardened offender, the wayward child, and the profligate parent, are freely offered the benefits these societies are constituted to bestow.

This is the grace that covers a multitude of sins; and its happy possessors are the children of God.

If Free Masonry does, we do not say the same things, but any one thing in the same spirit, or in the same manner, leaving the spirit, or motive, to the most charitable inference; then we will allow its claims to the affections of our countrymen, as a benevolent society, and reverence it as such.

FREE MASONRY IS A PHARISEE.

But if, like a pharisee, it salute those only who salute it, and love only who love it, Free Masonry is no better than a publican, and is not entitled to praise, or to reward.

If the institution gives that it may receive again, lends only where it may have occasion to borrow, and bestows its best favors scantily, and not in obedience to heavenly charity, but in obedience to the express conditions of a compact, ratified with an oath, then Free Masonry has not the smallest claim to the perfectness, or sanctity of a benevolent institution; it is actuated not by a spirit of love, but by a spirit of selfishness.

THE GIFTS OF FREE MASONS TO THE BRETHREN, ARE A DEBT SECURED BY AN OATH.

For instance; a number of men put a stipulated sum into a common fund, and bind themselves by an oath to prefer each others welfare in business before the welfare of all mankind besides; and bind themselves further, to aid, assist, and befriend any one of the brotherhood, his widow and orphans, who may be, in the course of events, brought into trouble, or reduced to want.

After a time one of the contracting parties becomes poor, or dies and leaves a dependent family behind. Now the Fraternity, upon the representation of some one of the brethren acquainted with the circumstances, bestir themselves.

Charity is lauded, while they examine the state of the funds; and, if so much is found in the treasury, they vote ten dollars to the relief of the poor family, or even twenty, if the case is urgent.

Is this charity, dear reader? Or is it a debt?

Justice demands the strict fulfilment of the compact. Charity does not begin until the terms of the compact have been satisfied, and its conditions faithfully fulfilled; and money given to its brethren by a society so organized, cannot in any sense be called a charity; *it is a debt*.

MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANIES.

We have societies of this kind existing in the land, but obliged to fulfill the conditions of the compact by the laws of our country, and not by an unlawful oath: need we add that they are much more faithful in discharging their legal obligations, than Free Masonry is in discharging the obligations of her oaths.

These are mutual assurance companies against losses by fire or otherwise. For a small bonus paid in, the society obligates itself to secure the property of the applicant against losses for a term of more or less years, according to the constitution of the society. At length a loss is suffered, and the sufferer comes, not begging for the fulfillment of the contract according to the oath; but as a freeman should come, demanding his right under guaranty of the laws of this country.

And who besides Free Masonry would boast of the fulfillment of this contract as an act of charity? The most it can be called, is, a debt promptly paid.

THE STATE POOR TAX IS NOT A CHARITY.

The laws of our country compel in many of the states, each town, or county, to support its own poor: and nobly they do it; in many instances a population of 1500 souls tax themselves to pay not a pittance, (as if to mock the wants of the needy,) but $500 and $700 per annum.

And who ever thought to call this tax a charity? Who at any time draws his hand from his pocket with the amount of his poor tax, and having discharged the collector, lays it on his bosom blessing himself for this act of charity?

Yet it has every claim to be accounted an act of charity, which Free Masonry can present with the advantage of exceeding in amount, fifty to one.

But it is no charity. The state guarantees to all its citizens, as Free Masonry does to all its members, a supply of necessaries of life, not as charity, but as a debt.

The obligations of support and protection are mutual: the government we support must protect us, and it is as much the *duty* of government to save its poor from starvation, as to save them from the hands of violence.

It is a mutual assurance company on a large theater of action; every member of the government, every citizen of the country, is liable to a reverse of fortunes, whether rich or poor;

and the poor tax of the rich is his equal proportion of the debt due from the community, to enable the government to discharge its just obligations.

This is praiseworthy providence; this shows a laudable concern for *every* individual in the state; but it is not so with Free Masonry. A few select ones, far removed from want, separate themselves from the community, and give to each other additional security for encouragement in business; and also against the reverse of fortune.

What induces them to give each other pledges of mutual support in misfortune? Certainly no leadings of divine charity, but motives of human prudence. And when misfortune breaks the hopes of one, he has a *right* to the provision laid up for this emergency in the days of his prosperity; and it is not act of charity in the fraternity to disperse that provision to his wants: it is his due.

THE PROVIDENCE OF FREE MASONRY IS STAINED WITH MARKS OF SELFISHNESS,

Free Masonry does not make this provision merely on grounds of human prudence, which might be laudable; but does it with marks of selfishness, which are not credible.

To rise above considerations of selfishness, the Fraternity ought to admit the high and low, rich and poor, sound and maimed alike, provided they have alike the character and mind of a man.

But our mutual insurance company does not choose to underwrite for those who have not a sound body, and a profitable trade, or occupation.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP.

"No person is capable of becoming a Mason, unless he is free born, of mature age, of good report, of sufficient natural endowments, and has the senses of a man, with an *estate*, office, trade, occupation, or some visible way of acquiring an honest livelihood.

He must also be upright in body, not deformed or dismembered at the time of making; but of hale and entire limbs, as a man ought to be." See Elder "Bradley on Masonry," p. 144. See, also, the Ahiman Rezon of S.C. p. 138. Also, the Ahiman Rezon of Pennsylvania, compiled by William Smith, D.D. p. 28. And, also, the Books of constitutions, and Manuals of Free Masonry generally, under the head of "Qualities requisite to become a Free Mason."

FREE MASONRY IS SWORN TO SUSTAIN ITS MEMBERS, AND THE DISCHARGE OF THAT OBLIGATION IS NOT CHARITY.